

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9665

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMCONSUL BELIZE CITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 1626

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NU

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA

1. ON APRIL 5, I ACCOMPANIED MARVIN WEISSMAN FOR A COURTESY CALL ON PRESIDENT SOMOZA WHICH THE LATTER CONVERTED INTO A LUNCHEON INVITATION. THE MEETING LASTED TWO AND A HALF HOURS, AND THE FOLLOWING TOPICS WERE COVERED:

2. NICARAGUAN 1976 MEAT QUOTA. I REPORTED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT THE USG HAD INCREASED NICARAGUA'S 1976 MEAT QUOTA BY 1.3 MILLION POUNDS OVER 1975, TO A TOTAL OF 48.9 MILLION POUNDS. HE SAID THAT HE WAS AWARE OF AUSTRALIA'S POSITION TO A CENTRAL AMERICAN QUOTA AND FELT THAT IT WAS NOW THE TURN OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES TO RECEIVE FAVORABLE TREATMENT. AUSTRALIA HAD BEEN VERY WELL TREATED BY THE US BECAUSE OF AUSTRALIA'S SUPPORT IN VIETNAM. BUT THAT ERA HAD PASSED.

3. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. THE PRESIDENT INDICATED THAT IN HIS RECENT TRAVELS AROUND THE COUNTRY, HE WAS AGAIN REMINDED OF THE NEED TO BRING BASIC SERVICES OF ALL KINDS TO THE RURAL DWELLER BETTER AND FASTER. HE WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED WITH THE INVIERNO
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EFFORT AND FELT THAT MANY OF ITS GOALS, INCLUDING EDUCATION, WERE

NOW GETTING INCREASED ATTENTION.

4. VIETNAMESE REFUGEES. I TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT WE HAD BEEN RECEIVING REPORTS ABOUT GON INTENTIONS TO RESETTLE VIETNAM REFUGEES. IT WAS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE RESETTLEMENT WAS BEING ARRANGED BY THE GON WITH PRIVATE GROUPS. WE FELT THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF HANDLING THIS PROBLEM WAS BETWEEN THE GON AND THE ICEM, TO WHICH NICARAGUA BELONGED. I NOTED THAT THE PRIVATE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT GROUPS ARE NOT OPERATING UNDER USG SPONSORSHIP. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE HAD NOT HEARD FROM THE USG SINCE THE INITIAL OVERTURE OVER A YEAR AGO, AND THAT HE WOULD DO WHAT HE COULD OUT OF SOLIDARITY. BUT HE WAS INTERESTED TO KNOW THAT THE US GENERALLY FAVORED AN OFFICIAL INTERNATIONAL APPROACH TO VIETNAM REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS. WITH THE CONTEXT OF A GENERAL DISCUSSION OF CONGRESSIONAL FOREIGNPOLICY, MARVIN WEISSMAN NOTED THE RISING CONCERN IN CONGRESS AND IN THE US GENERALLY ABOUT OUR RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES THAT VIOLATE HUMAN RIGHTS. HE POINTED OUT THAT RECENTLY CHILE, BRAZIL, AND URUGUAY, WERE MENTIONED MOST OFTEN, BUT THAT NICARAGUA, GUATEMALA AND OTHER COUNTRIES ALSO WERE RECEIVING ATTENTION ON THIS ISSUE.

6. THE PRESIDENT RACTED STRONGLY AND SAID THAT HE WAS INCREASINGLY CHAGRINED AT THE CONGRESSIONAL HANDLING OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. HE RESENTED VERY MUCH THE FACT THAT A DOUBLE STANDARD WAS BEING APPLIED. PANAMA HAS, HE SAID, VIOLATED HUMAN RIGHTS ON A LARGE SCALE UNDER TORRIJOS, BUT PANAMA WAS NEVER CRITICIZED FOR IT IN THE US PRESS AND CONGRESS. THE SAME WAS TRUE OF CUBA. WHAT DOES THE UNITED STATES WANT US TO DO? WE HAVE AN INTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEM, AND WE ARE TRYING TO DEFEND OURSELVES. DO YOU WANT US TO GO COMMUNIST?

IF YOU CUT OFF OUR ECONOMIC AID, THEN WAHT? IT IS TIME, HE SAID, THAT THE ADMINISTRATION TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND TEACH THE CONGRESS THE FACTS OF LIFE. CRITICISM BASED ON DOUBLE STANDARDS IS UNACCEPTABLE TO ANY POLITICAL LEADER. THE US HAS NO BUSINESS TELLING FRIENDLY COUNTRIES HOW TO GOVERN, OR TO INTERVENE IN THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

7. SOMOZA SAID THAT THE US IS NOW OPPOSED BY MOST OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS, MAINLY THE SOCIALIST NATIONS, AND MOST OF

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THE THIRD WORLD. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS CREITICISING ITS FRIENDS. US THREATS NO LONGER HAVE THE EFFECT THEY USED T HAVE. NO ONE HAS A MONOPOLY OF POWER AND INFLUENCE ANYMORE.

8. THE PRESIDENT STATED THAT HE PERSONALLY OPPOSED CENSORSHIP AND FELT THAT A FREE PRESS SERVED THE USEFUL PURPOSE OF RESTRAINING MALFEASANCE BY PUBLIC OFFICIALS. CENSORSHIP WAS IMPOSED, HE SAID, AS AN EMERGENCY MEASURE AFTER THE LOS ROBLES INCIDENT,

BUT IT WOULD BE REMOVED AFTER THE MILITARY TRIALS WERE COMPLETED.

9. HE ADMITTED THAT THE SOMOZA NAME AROUSED ENMITY, BUT HE ARGUED THAT THE LIBERAL PARTY, UNDER THE SOMOZAS AND BEFORE, HAD BROUGHT EXCEPTIONAL PEACE AND PROGRESS TO NICARAGUA. HE SAID THAT HE WAS ALSO UNDERATTACK BECAUSE OF THE STRONG SUPPORT HE HAD ALWAYS GIVEN THE US WHEN ASKED TO DO SO.

10. BELIZE. SOMOZA BELIEVED THAT THE POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT BETWEEN BELIZE AND GUATEMALA ACTUALLY MAY HAVE INCREASED SINCE THE EARTHQUAKE. HE FELT THAT GUATEMALA MIGHT WELL MOUNT AN ATTACK ON BELIZE TO DISTRACT THE ATTENTION OF THE GUATEMALAN PEOPLE. HE HAD NO EVIDENCE THAT THIS WAS PRESIDENT LAUGERUD'S INTENTION, BUT FELT IT COULD NOT BE RULED OUT.

11. CACM. THE PRESIDENT OUTLINED THE EFFORTS HE HAS MADE OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS TO ENCOURAGE A SETTLEMENT OF THE EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS DISPUTE. HE SAID THAT HIS PATIENCE WAS RUNNING OUT AND HE WAS NOW WARNING BOTH SIDES THAT A FAILURE TO REACH AN ACCORD WOULD LEAD TO A BREAKING UP OF THE COMMON MARKET, WHICH WOULD NOT SERVE THE INTERESTS OF ANY COUNTRY. SOMOZA SAID HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY RECENT SIGNS OF PROGRESS AND PARTICULARLY HIS TALK WITH MELGAR ON APRIL 1.

12 COMMENT: THE CONVERSATION WAS VERY CORDIAL AND AMIABLE. RAISING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, HOWEVER, PROVOKED AN UNUSUALLY STRONG REACTION BY SOMOZA. QUITE OBVIOUSLY, HE CONSIDERS CRITICISM OF NICARAGUA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD TO BE EXAGGERATED AND MISPLACED, PARTICULARLY IN THE CONTEXT OF WHAT HE PERCEIVES AS SELECTIVE MORALISM IN THE UNITED STATES.

13. SOMOZA'S RESPONSE SHOWED THAT HE HAD GIVEN CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT TO THE ISSUE AND THAT HE WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY IRRITATED AT
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OUT IMPLIED CRITICISM OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCES. AFTER NUMEROUS CONVERSATIONS I'VE HAD WITH SOMOZA CONCERNING RISING US CONGRESSIONAL, MEDIA AND PUBLIC CONCERN OVER HUMAN RIGHTS, HE IS FULLY AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES MIGHT CREATE IN OUR RELATIONS. HE IS NOW SAYING, IN EFFECT, THAT NICARAGUA'S

RECORD IS BETTER THAN MOST LATIN COUNTRIES AND THAT WHAT HE CON-
STRUES AS US MEDDLING IN NICARAGUA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS WILL NOT BE
ACCEPTED.

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